

ARE ETHICS AND THEOLOGY VITALLY CONNECTED?

An Address

DELIVERED AT

MANCHESTER NEW COLLEGE, OXFORD,

ON THE

OPENING OF THE ACADEMIC YEAR,

OCTOBER, 1892,

BY

REV. CHARLES BARNES UPTON, B.A., B.Sc.

"The College adheres to its original principle of freely imparting Theological knowledge without insisting on the adoption of particular Theological doctrines."

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Are Ethics and Theology Vitally Connected?

WHETHER Ethics and Theology are vitally connected or not, there can be no question that, in the Christian Churches of this and other countries, there is at present a much closer connection between Theology and Ethics than has been seen at any time since the Reformation. During the last quarter of a century, the practical interest of the Churches in the social problems of the time has increased a hundred fold. Up till quite recently, there was a marked difference between the so-called orthodox Christians, on the one hand, and earnest men outside the orthodox pale, on the other, in their idea of their ethical relations to the society around them. The former were, no doubt, very much concerned about the salvation of souls, and did many deeds of charity to the poor and suffering within their own communion or their own parishes; but it was, in the main, left to the latter—to those whose interest in established theologies was very slight—to initiate great movements for the general amelioration of the condition of the poorer classes. The establishment, for instance, of undenominational Domestic Missions, of societies for the universalizing of education, for the encouragement of thrift and temperance, were, in the main, due to the efforts of those who attached little importance to the popularly-accepted creeds and articles of faith. But, in the present day, we have changed all this, and orthodox and heterodox are emulating each other as to who shall do the most effective work in repressing public immorality, and in opening higher opportunities to those whom the present arrangements of society unduly depress. It is evident that, in the most influential

Christian Churches, the centre of main ethical interest has recently shifted. It has passed from the other world to this present world. In the former days of Protestantism this world was of small account for its own sake; though, no doubt, immensely important as a preparatory stage in which souls were to be qualified for entrance to that spirit-world, which was separated from our world by a vast gulf over which only disembodied souls could pass. The consequence was, that the social condition of this present world became of small importance in every respect save one, viz., its suitability for most effectually bringing souls into such a condition of orthodox soundness as would secure their admission to the society of the redeemed in the world to come. Now, however, the case is quite altered. Heaven and Hell are no longer regarded by the most cultured Christians, in either the Established or the Nonconformist Churches, as separated in space and time from this earth of ours. They pervade the universe; they overlap and interpenetrate all classes and all phases of society. God is no longer regarded as the Judge whom we shall one day have to meet when we have shuffled off this mortal coil; He is far nearer to us than our own bodies are. In every moral struggle within us it is He who passes unerring judgment on the sinner, and reveals himself as a sympathising and supporting presence to the victorious soul. No wonder, then, that this present world has acquired a quite new charm, a quite new interest for the earnest Christian believer; for this earth is no longer viewed as merely a subsidiary stage, but is itself the theatre of as momentous dramas as the universe can anywhere present. God is here; here may the pure in heart see Him; here do the selfish and the sensual personally realise the truth, that he who seeketh his own life shall lose it; here do the lovers of humanity practically discover that God is Love, and whoso dwelleth in Love dwelleth in God and God in him.

It is not necessary, for my present purpose, to dwell at length

on the causes which have led to this grand reformation in theological conceptions; but it deserves to be noticed that, whatever these causes may have been, their operation has by no means been confined to the members of Christian Churches, or even to professed Theists. The increased knowledge of the physical universe, the more profound study of human nature, the more thorough insight into the true genius of the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures, and the appreciative comparison of the various sacred literatures in which the religious experience of our race has recorded itself; these and other causes have, no doubt, concurred in awakening a much more vivid feeling of sympathy between man and man, and also the firm conviction that, if God exists at all, the Holy of Holies where man may most surely meet Him is at the centre of each man's moral being, and at the inner springs of man's noblest enthusiasms and self-forgetful affections. The moving principle which is now sending to the East end of London, and to similar fields of effort elsewhere, young men of refined tastes and of high academic culture, and which is manifesting its presence not only in all the great centres of learning but also in the smaller colleges such as our own, is evidently an intense consciousness of the brotherhood of humanity, and of a divine summons felt in the inmost heart to strive, as far as in us lies, to establish the Kingdom of Divine Love on earth.

I have called your attention to the fact that this humanitarian spirit is at present stirring alike within and without the Christian Churches. It is inspiring many persons who call themselves Atheists or Agnostics; and it is the gospel which is kindling enthusiasm in those Ethical Societies which would decline to take any theological name. It is to be noted, too, that active as this spirit now is in many so-called orthodox Churches, it was not in them that its earliest manifestations arose. It was rather among unorthodox Christians that this close association of religion with public and private morality, with social reforms

and educational schemes, first became conspicuous; and the portraits around us in this room will recall the memory of some of the most active pioneers in this good work. And though General Booth's great scheme for the relief of the very poor, and the late Cardinal Manning's warm interest in the recent labour struggles, seem to show that adhesion to the orthodox view of the infinite importance of theological doctrines may go along with vigorous efforts to heal the social ailments of the age, still there is, I believe, good reason for maintaining that a strong practical interest in the material and moral improvement of human society is closely connected, either as cause or effect, with a tendency to burst through the restraints of dogmatic orthodoxy, and to recur to a simple Christian Theism closely akin to that which Dr. Martineau, in the "Seat of Authority," considers to have been the authentic teaching of Jesus of Nazareth. And facts bear out what logic leads us to expect, that those who are most ardent in their effort to infuse an ethical and religious spirit into all the commonly-called secular relations of life, are, on the whole, surely moving either slowly or rapidly in the direction of what is called the "New Theology." Now this New Theology surrenders all the chief points of orthodoxy save one, and that one appears to be held by a very uncertain tenure. Jesus is still regarded by the "new theologians" as, in a certain sense, quite *sui generis*, and not simply as the elder brother among those inspired men through whom revelation is made of the essential character of the Eternal. But this wholly exceptional treatment of humanity's greatest prophet is evidently no more than a transitional compromise, which appears to have no sanction whatever in the genuine utterances of Jesus himself. The Trinity, we are told by the chief expounder of the New Theology, is only a mode of expressing the three-fold revelation of God, in Nature, in Humanity, and in the Individual Soul; and though Dr. Lynam

Abbott tries to persuade himself and his hearers that "Jesus is not a man like other men," yet he inevitably slips into modes of expression which show that he simply gives to Jesus the supreme position in the grand category of spiritual genius. Thus he writes: "Genius is always a mystery, spiritual genius the greatest mystery of genius, and Christ the greatest mystery of all." What else can this possibly mean than that the mystery involved in the birth of Jesus is a mystery identical in kind with that which enwraps the origin of Isaiah, of Socrates, of Shakespeare, of Channing, and, indeed, of every soul through whom new light from the universal spirit has streamed into the world?

Now, the conspicuous fact that the recent outburst of ethical enthusiasm—the determination to do away with the unnatural separation between sacred and secular interests—has been accompanied, on both sides of the Atlantic, by a loosening of the old dogmatic restraints and the recurrence to much simpler forms of theological conception, suggests a question of the highest importance to all thoughtful Christians. The question it suggests is neither more nor less than this, Is the part which Theology has played in the world's history rapidly coming to a close? For, when we see a much healthier and nobler public spirit asserting itself in society, and note that this spirit, so far from owing its origin to the generally-received Theology, has evidently arisen in spite of that Theology, and has largely succeeded in forcing that Theology to take a more rational and liberal form, the first idea which will suggest itself is this, that a living Ethics appears to have no vital connection at all with theological faith, and to derive its being and its energy from a quite different source. And this first impression can hardly fail to be confirmed when we take a glance over the course of ecclesiastical history, and behold with horror the cruel oppressions and persecutions which have been, and to some small extent are still being perpetrated

in the name of Theology. In face of these terrible effects of ecclesiastical bigotry, we can hardly wonder that the Bradlaughs and Ingersolls of our time concur with the old Roman poet in denouncing the thing called "Theology," and in extolling the men who, from time to time, have dared to confront this foe to mental freedom, and to make a brave stand against it.

But, after our first natural indignation at the great mischief wrought by certain theological ideas has somewhat cooled down, we cannot help seeing that there is another side to the picture. These ecclesiastical tyrannies, which have been so effective for evil, do not present themselves at the origin of any genuine religious movement. They are evidently to be the product either of false intellectual inferences from the original faith, or else of the corruption of that faith by sacerdotal or worldly adulteration. Even in the case of the Greek and Roman religions, there was a time when these faiths were in perfect harmony with the Ethics of the day, and gave to that Ethics a powerful stimulus. And in the case of Christianity, even the most anti-theological critic will probably agree with J. S. Mill, that "religion cannot be said to have made a bad choice in pitching on Jesus as the ideal representative and guide of humanity." Nor is it possible to read the history of the Catholic Church in its best days, or to study the moral and social effects of the religious movements initiated by the early Reformers, and by Fox and Wesley, without coming to the conclusion that, in the nett result, the ethical balance is immensely to the credit of Christianity. And even now-a-days, in the very midst of our labour disputes and other social troubles, Jesus is more and more being referred to as the man in whose ideas the true key of the situation is to be found.

The consideration of these facts may well make us pause when we feel inclined either to denounce Theology as a foe to Ethics, or to treat it with contempt as an old tyrant who is now decrepit and rapidly becoming of no account either for

good or ill. In connection with this question, it is interesting to observe the recent formation, by some influential persons whose character commands our high respect, of a "West London Ethical Society," one of the chief objects of which is, we read, "to assist in constructing the theory or science of right, which, starting with the reality and validity of moral distinctions, shall, for the sake of clearness, separate the facts of the moral life, as far as possible, from theological and metaphysical presuppositions, shall explain their mental and social origin, and connect them in a logical system of thought."

When we hear a person inveighing against metaphysics, and expressing a wish that ethical teachers and religious preachers should divest their minds of metaphysical ideas, we cannot avoid thinking that this person's notion of what is meant by metaphysics must be in a very misty condition, and that, after the fashion of Molière's hero, he has been talking metaphysics all his life without knowing it. Assuredly, if either the preacher or the teacher should attempt to act upon this well-meant advice, he would find that silence was his only resource, for not one intelligible sentence could he utter without bringing in some "metaphysical presupposition." John Stuart Mill and his disciples would fain give a non-metaphysical account of the universe by teaching that so-called external objects have no reality save as subjective sensations amalgamated by association; but the moment they begin to impart their views to others they are at once compelled to make metaphysical assumptions, for the persons to whom they speak are evidently not merely associated groups of the speaker's visual and other sensations, but are metaphysical realities whose existence must be presupposed. But I am perhaps hardly doing justice to the view expressed in the above extract, for the object of the Society is only to get rid of metaphysical and theological presuppositions *as far as possible*. I think I shall presently be able to make it clear, that the promoters

of this Society are not at all chargeable with the absurdity of seeking to annihilate either Metaphysics or Theology; that, on the contrary, they make a very liberal use of both. What they really object to, and wish to get rid of, is a *particular kind* of Metaphysics and Theology for which they have a strong distaste. I do not think, however, that I am misrepresenting their scheme when I say that, on the surface of it, it seems as if they regarded the connection between Ethics and Theology as something like the connection which associated together the late Siamese twins. Ethics and Theology have been connected hitherto, and although they have not got on very well together, and one has sometimes tried to injure or destroy the other, it has not been practicable until now to cut them clean asunder. At the present time, however, one of the pair (Theology) is supposed to be in a moribund condition, and so in the interest of the living one (Ethics) it has become absolutely necessary to sever the link which has hitherto united them; for Ethics happens just now to be singularly vigorous, and the idea in many minds is that, if it can once rid itself of the dead weight of theological speculation and theological authority, it has a splendid future before it, and bids fair by its own unaided efforts to gradually eliminate vice and suffering, and to convert this world, as far as may be, into an earthly paradise.

As I have said, however, the founders of the new Ethical Society express themselves carefully; their aim is to get rid of metaphysical and theological presuppositions *as far as they can*. They are evidently not quite sure whether the entire severance of the hitherto connected twins is feasible without involving fatal results to the living member whose life they are so wishful to save. And this caution on their part is altogether in its right place, for, if we turn to the books which best represent the views of the earnest and gifted men to whose energy and enthusiasm these societies for ethical culture in America and England are

mainly due, viz., to the writings of Dr. Felix Adler and Mr. W. M. Salter, we speedily find that so far are they from giving up Metaphysics and Theology that, on the contrary, it is the continually implied Metaphysics and Theology which warms and illumines their teaching, and so makes that teaching competent to touch the heart and influence the conduct. The impression which Mr. Salter's eloquent volume on "Ethical Religion" makes on my mind is to strongly confirm what I regard as the true doctrine, viz., that Ethics and Theology are vitally connected; for that no Ethics can have life and power, or, indeed, deserve the name of Ethics, which does not carry in it the germ of theological faith, and no Theology has any solid basis which is not mainly founded upon the ethical consciousness. In support of this opinion I ask your attention to the following quotation from the treatise just referred to. On page 307, Mr. Salter writes:—"For the sense of morality is the sense of somewhat sacred, holy; it is the sense of a law above all other laws. There is not a law of Nature that may not conceivably be altered or suspended, or that we may not violate or defy, should duty command. We use Nature every day—her forces, her laws, we are for ever turning to account. We cannot worship Nature or the sum of Nature's powers. That sovereign allegiance and fealty we owe to what is absolutely inviolable, to what we dare not use, to what exists for its own sake, and we for it,—to Goodness, to Love, to Eternal Truth. The moral sentiment dwarfs Nature, it goes out to what is beyond Nature. What is regnant in the universe is no fact, nor sum of facts; no law in the actual sense, nor sum of laws,—BUT A COMMANDMENT. AND THE DEEPEST, THE BOTTOM THING IN THE UNIVERSE MUST BE THAT WHICH IS CAPABLE OF GIVING A COMMANDMENT."

There is surely no lack of Metaphysics in this and many similar passages in Mr. Salter's book, for no mere phenomena, whether physical or psychological, avail in the slightest degree to

demonstrate that what is regnant in the universe is *a commandment*, and that therefore the bottom thing in the universe must be *that which is capable of giving a commandment*. This unconditional ethical imperative, on which Mr. Salter so emphatically and, in my view, so justly insists, is neither more nor less than a "metaphysical presupposition," which our author's moral consciousness appears to necessitate, just as Mr. Herbert Spencer's assertion of the existence of an Eternal Energy as the cause of all our sentient perceptions is a "metaphysical presupposition" which, he declares, no clear thinker can avoid making. Mr. Salter rightly insists that it is the belief that the fundamental principle of the universe issues ethical commandments which justifies him in speaking of an "ethical religion;" and precisely in the same way Mr. Spencer declares that it is the recognition of the existence of an ultimate personal or superpersonal Energy which converts his "synthetic philosophy" into a religion. I take it that both Mr. Salter and Mr. Spencer have here got to the root of the matter; it is these metaphysical or theological elements in their teaching which awaken interest, and touch the springs of emotion; for these basal principles of theirs are no mere scientific generalizations about phænomena; they aim to throw light on the eternal Ground and Cause behind phænomena, and in so doing they appeal to, and in some measure, great or small, satisfy one of the deepest yearnings of the human mind and heart. The real difference between merely scientific treatises, and such books as Mr. Salter's "Ethical Religion," or Mr. Spencer's "First Principles," is that the latter deal essentially with metaphysical problems, while the former do not. It is the characteristic of all Metaphysics and Theology, as distinct from Science, that their assumptions or theories, however satisfactory to the minds which make them, do not, as the teachings of established science do, necessarily win for themselves the unanimous assent of critical thinkers. The ultimate problems of

Metaphysics and Theology are as much matters of dispute now as they were in the vigorous periods of Greek and Indian speculation. And the evident reason of this is, that in studying Philosophy and Theology we are no longer wholly in the region of sensational facts which are accessible to all minds alike in all their spiritual moods. We have entered a sphere where, as Emerson would say, the individual soul realises, with more or less clearness and fulness, the influx of the universal soul—the sphere of spiritual discernment, of poetic vision, of prophetic inspiration; and in this sphere a thinker's philosophical and theological theories will largely depend upon the depth and richness of his spiritual experience, and will vary even in the same individual as the tides of thought and emotion ebb and flow. According as each man's spiritual nature is richly endowed and vividly awakened, will be the kind of ethical theory, the kind of theology, the kind of poetry, which will come home to him as giving for the moment the most adequate solution of the ultimate problems which the eternal Sphinx is ever propounding to the questioning intellect of man. It is here that what is called *Faith* comes in as a necessary factor in our experience, for in seasons of spiritual dulness we put faith in the clearer vision of our higher and better moods; and Christendom puts faith in the utterances of the Sermon on the Mount, because it is felt that they are the vivid expression of a real spiritual experience, the faint lineaments of which are discernible in every earnest mind.

Now, although philosophical and theological theories are not, as science is, capable of being put into a shape which shall carry conviction to all minds alike, they are, nevertheless, among the most potent influences which affect the happiness and the progress of society. It is books which throw new light on these questions that attract and powerfully affect many readers, for it is in these questions, much more than in the details of phænomenal science,

that the heart and mind of society is profoundly interested. If Mr. Salter's treatise on "Ethical Religion" had been devoid of Metaphysics, its interest and its influence would have been practically *nil*. It is the metaphysical salt which seasons the book and wins for it admiring readers. I maintain, then, that this volume (which, I believe, is recognised as a manifesto of the position of the American Societies for the promotion of Ethical Culture) derives its main importance from the metaphysical principle that the inmost spirit of the universe expresses itself with unconditional authority in man's ethical consciousness. Strip your Ethics of this metaphysical presupposition, and Mr. Salter would be the first to admit that you are left with a mere collection of individual pleasures and pains, of individual likings and dislikings; and the only way in which an ethical preacher, who will not accept this presupposition, can morally influence society, is by endeavouring to develop in his hearers a taste for a higher kind of personal satisfactions. But all experience shows how utterly feeble and futile is this method when compared with a direct appeal to that universal moral imperative, which is capable of being aroused in every soul. Mr. Salter would probably reply that this recognition of a supreme ethical commandment, in obedience to which all genuine morality arises, involves no *Theology*. And indeed, he proceeds, in continuation of the passage above given, to say, "this commandment is not matter, then, nor force, nor will, but reason, or that ineffable reality of which human reason is a poor and shadowy suggestion." Mr. Salter, then, appears to think that, by maintaining that this categorical imperative is not an expression of "Will," but rather of "Reason," he has clearly drawn the line between "ethical" and "theological" religion. And, no doubt, most Theists would admit that there is some important difference between the view of God as a personal being, who stands in personal relations of sympathy or disapproval with each individual soul, and the

Hegelian theory of God as self-evolving Thought or Reason, of which individual souls appear to be only successive phases, or modes of manifestation. But that Mr. Salter is mistaken in supposing that his view of God as Reason at once places him outside of the class of Theistic believers, is, I think, evident, when we consider that the late Professor T. H. Green, whose strong Hegelian leanings are so well known, always speaks of God as the eternal Self-consciousness, or the eternal Thinker, and certainly regarded himself as quite in accord with all that is most fundamental in Christian Theology.

When a thinker invites us, as Mr. Salter does, to worship as well as to obey that indwelling Reason which issues commands to us in our moral consciousness, I entirely fail to see any essential distinction between his position and that of the Christian Theist. I am far from thinking that Mr. Salter's Metaphysics or Theology is adequate, or that it is competent to touch morality with effective emotion to the same extent as Christian Theism does. Nay, it seems to me clear that Mr. Salter's position in this matter is an unstable one, and that he must either advance into a much more definite Theology or retreat, as some of the disciples of the late Prof. Green are now doing, to a merely naturalistic or evolutionary theory of the origin of ethical ideas. But be this as it may, there can, I think, be no doubt that the recognition of indwelling Reason as that which has an inherent right to command our allegiance, and to overrule our individual passions and ambitions, is a distinct and most influential article of theological faith. The difference, then, between the present position of the founders of the new Ethical Society and that of the Christian Theist, in regard to Ethics, does not appear to be a difference of kind. Both alike admit metaphysical or theological principles, and regard the recognition of these principles as vital to the existence of an effective Ethics. The distinction between them is simply in the extent to which they develop the metaphysical

or theological faith by which they vitalize their ethical conceptions. If, with the ethicist, we regard "the bottom thing in the universe as that which is capable of giving a commandment," then our ethical theory is no longer hedonistic, and that which gives sanctity and authority to the voice of conscience is no personal desires of ours, but the indwelling within us of divine reason. If, on the other hand, our Theology takes the more developed form presented in Christian Theism, then the inner source of ethical authority is felt to involve also a personal relationship between the individual and the universal soul; and, in this view, the spirit of reason and love which unifies and actuates the cosmos stands in closer relations of personal intimacy with each human soul than any finite individuals can stand to each other. The essence of Christian Theism rests on assurance that the "deepest thing in the universe" not only issues "commandments" to us in our conscience, but is specially interested in every human soul, and invites, but does not compel, that soul to pass into conscious union and communion with Him.

We have seen how indispensable to an inspiring view of Ethics is even so much Metaphysics and Theology as that which Dr. Felix Adler and his coadjutors accept; and if the ethical consciousness is exalted and reinforced by this idea of God as the source of all ethical commandments, it certainly does not derive less inspiration from that feeling of the personal relation between the individual soul and the Eternal, which leads the Theist to speak of the Father within him. In both cases it is a metaphysical or theological theory of the universe which invests ethical distinctions with such high interest and infinite importance.

But here a word or two is necessary to prevent the mistake, into which anti-theological moralists so often fall, of supposing that this view of the intimate and, indeed, vital relation between Theology and Ethics implies that ethical insight depends upon

prior theological conceptions. Thus, Mr. Frederick Harrison thinks that he is controverting Dr. Martineau's view when he writes:—To "assert that there is no morality but what is based on Theology is to assert what experience, history, and philosophy flatly contradict. History teaches us that some of the best types in men and races have been found apart from anything that Christians can call Theology at all." Certainly, if the Theist asserted that ethical insight and the sense of ethical obligation arise out of the previous acceptance of a theological creed, he would be open to immediate refutation by an appeal to the most evident facts. But the real state of the case is precisely the reverse of that which Mr. Harrison supposes, for the theistic contention is not that the Theology generates the Ethics, but, on the contrary, that it is the ethical consciousness which forms one, and the most important, of the sources whence theological convictions arise. All that is maintained here is that a man's philosophical or theological theory of the universe—his *Weltanschauung*, as the Germans call it—which is the product of the concurrent action of his rational, moral, and spiritual experiences, reacts in a very influential way on that moral consciousness to which it largely owes its own existence, and, by this reaction, either tends to divest the moral consciousness of its sacred and authoritative character, or, on the other hand, enhances that divine authority, and combines with it a powerful emotional persuasiveness growing out of the consciousness in the finite spirit of humble co-operation with the spirit of the whole.

How needful it is for effective Ethics that it should be associated with an inspiring faith, nobody sees more clearly than the present leader of the English Positivists; for he writes:—"Morality will never suffice for life, and every attempt to base our existence on morality alone must certainly fail. For this is to fling away the most powerful motives of human nature. To reach these is the privilege of Religion alone. And those who

trust that the Future can ever be built upon Science and civilisation without Religion, are attempting to build a pyramid of bricks without straw."

Mr. Harrison thinks that we can obtain the inspiration which Ethics needs from what he calls a non-theological religion, *i.e.*, from the worship of past, present, and future Humanity, that *Grand Être* which absorbs Positivist devotion. But each one of us, apart from a living faith in the divine meaning of the universe, is but a poor and feeble creature; and it is impossible to understand how the thought of the aggregation of such individuals can avail to furnish the needed inspiration and enthusiasm. Mr. Harrison points to the striking progress which humanity has so far made; but surely this very progress is wholly inexplicable within the limits of individual insight and individual purpose, and necessarily seeks its explanation in a metaphysical or theological conception of the cosmos as a whole.

I have argued that both "Ethical Religion" and "Christian Theism" necessarily involve an implicit or an explicit Theology, and that it is this Theology which at once makes religion possible, and at the time brings strong emotional influences to bear on moral conduct. The limits of this Address do not admit of an adequate comparison of the respective claims of these two forms of religion on the assent and devotion of mankind. I may briefly say, however, that I am quite unable to see how the founders of the new societies for ethical culture can go so far as they do in the direction of Metaphysics and Theology without being logically constrained to advance further. Surely, if "the deepest thing in the universe is that which is capable of giving a commandment," such a principle is only conceivable by us under a personal form, and must at least involve in its nature all that is essential in that personality which, in the case of man, it has called into existence. Nor, further, is the word "commandment" intelligible, unless it involves the possibility in man of disobeying

these ethical injunctions, and so implies man's possession of free-will. And here I may, in conclusion, remind you what a vast difference it makes in our fundamantal view of God, man, and nature, and therefore in the ethical effect of our religious philosophy, whether we regard the great amount of moral depravity in the world, and the consequent suffering, as being in large measure explicable as unavoidably attendant on the possession by man of the supreme privilege of moral freedom, or, on the other hand, hold with the Hegelians that man, in the development of his character, possesses no real alternative of choice, and that therefore all that is noble, as well as all that is mean and base in humanity, are equally indispensable and inevitable phases in the necessary evolution of eternal self-existent thought.

But whether Christian Theism is or is not virtually involved in the Metaphysics by which such teachers as Dr. Adler and Mr. Salter succeed in kindling a certain amount of ethical interest and enthusiasm, there can, I believe, be not the slightest doubt that the high object at which these ethical societies aim will by no means be achieved by "separating the facts of the moral life, as far as possible, from metaphysical and theological presuppositions," for this, as we have seen, is the very way to draw off the life-blood from Ethics and Theology alike. Ethics and Theology are the two-fold factors of man's idea of his relation to the ultimate Ground and Cause of the cosmos of nature and humanity. As such they incessantly and powerfully inter-act, and the best interests of each are indissolubly bound up with the purification and elevation of the other. Ethics, in so far as it is wholly divorced from implicit or explicit Theology, inevitably drops out the element of authority, and becomes transformed into a mere calculus of personal and sympathetic pleasures; and Theology passes into debasing superstition when it ceases to be vitally associated with that unconditional ethical imperative which most unmistakably reveals the immanent presence of God in humanity.

